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FM AMEMBASSY TASHKENT
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 0549
INFO ALL SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIA COLLECTIVE
CIS COLLECTIVE
RHEHAAA/NSC WASHINGTON DC
RUEABND/DEA HQS WASHINGTON DC
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC
RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHINGTON DC
RUEAWJA/DEPT OF JUSTICE WASHINGTON DC
RUEHHE/AMEMBASSY HELSINKI
RUEHLJ/AMEMBASSY LJUBLJANA 0001
RUEHNT/AMEMBASSY TASHKENT
RUEHRO/AMEMBASSY ROME 0003
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 TASHKENT 000231

SIPDIS
AMEMBASSY HELSINKI PASS TO AMCONSUL ST PETERSBURG
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW PASS TO AMCONSUL VLADIVOSTOK
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW PASS TO AMCONSUL YEKATERINBURG
AMEMBASSY ASTANA PASS TO USOFFICE ALMATY
AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI PASS TO AMCONSUL HYDERABAD

E.O. 12958: DECL: 2018-12-22
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [EFIN](#) [ICRC](#) [KCOR](#) [ECON](#) [KCRM](#) [UZ](#)
SUBJECT: Tashkent Tidbits - March 2, 2009

TASHKENT 00000231 001.2 OF 003

CLASSIFIED BY: Timothy P Buckley, Second Secretary; REASON: 1.4(B), (D)

Forensic Internship Proposal Denied

¶1. (SBU) A successful ongoing INL-sponsored forensic laboratory improvement program implemented by DOJ-ICITAP suffered a mild setback when the Government of Uzbekistan delivered a diplomatic note on February 17 denying a proposal to send an Uzbek forensic scientist to the Harris County Medical Examiner's Office for a month-long internship in the toxicology department. This proposal followed numerous productive visits by U.S. experts to the Main Forensic Laboratory in Tashkent, who installed sophisticated equipment, conducted training sessions, and expanded professional networks. As usual, no explanation was given for the denial, although it suggests authorities remain suspicious of any unescorted program for government employees on U.S. territory, no matter how technical and benign it may seem to us. We expect other elements of the project involving equipment and training sessions in Uzbekistan to continue with the support of the government, although efforts to expose Uzbek scientists to the mainstream international academic community will be subjected to case-by-case scrutiny. Currently, an Uzbek delegation is participating in a USG-funded forensics event in the U.S., although the government inexplicably cancelled the participation of the First Deputy Minister of Health on short notice.

Convertibility Woes Deepening?

¶2. (SBU) On February 23 we met with Aziz Khodjimotov, New Business Development Manager at International Health Care Consulting AG, the pharmaceutical branch of Janssen-Cilag, which in turn is a

subsidiary of Johnson & Johnson in the U.S. He told us that his organization is now experiencing convertibility delays of as much as 12-13 months, which greatly exceeds previous reports from Proctor & Gamble of delays on the order of 270 days. Khodjimatonov continued that Russian pharmaceutical companies have gotten convertibility relief after intervention by the Russian Embassy, and he asked if we could do the same. AmCham met recently with Minister of Foreign Economic Relations Ganiev but did not get any traction; the GOU appears set in its policy of import substitution.

Italian Counternarcotics Interests

13. (C) On February 22 poloff asked Raffaele Ungaro, the Police Attache from the Embassy of Italy, why his country chose to send a police attache to its small mission in Tashkent. Ungaro noted that Italy was a strong supporter of the project to launch the counternarcotics-focused Central Asian Regional Information and Coordination Center (CARICC) under the earlier stewardship of an Italian UNODC regional director, and Italy still feels a sense of responsibility for seeing the project succeed. Italy also wanted to show leadership when it chaired the mini-Dublin group. He conceded that most Afghan-origin narcotics actually reach Italy via a westward route through Iran and Turkey rather than north through Uzbekistan, which means Italy has less of a strategic interest in the former Soviet republics of Central Asia. Ungaro also reported the same access problems almost all foreigners experience, and currently he is trying to overcome a lackluster response from the

TASHKENT 00000231 002.2 OF 003

National Security Service (NSS) to an offer for a training program in Italy.

Slovenes to Enter NGO Scene?

14. (C) Mjusa Sever, the former Country Director of the U.S.-funded NGO Institute for New Democracies (IND), returned to Uzbekistan on February 20 and immediately met with Uzbek officials about the possibility of "continuing our dialogue" under the auspices of a new NGO she just registered in Slovenia. Sever told poloff on February 22 that the Slovene Government may provide some limited support for anti-corruption work and a conference, and she added that the GOU has asked her to do media relations and civil society development work. Sever built up impressive access to sensitive government ministries after several years working in Uzbekistan, and she may try to market that to seek funding support from international donors for other projects. A key indicator of her clout will be whether and how quickly the GOU registers her NGO.

ICRC Negotiations with Ministry of Internal Affairs

15. (C) ICRC's Deputy Regional Director in Central Asia, Raffaello Muller, told poloff on February 22 that the prisons directorate of the Ministry of Internal Affairs (known as GUIN) remains open and cooperative to working with ICRC in response to ICRC's recently

submitted report. However, Muller said working with the Ministry's investigations division - which controls preliminary detention facilities at police stations throughout the country - remains a challenge partly due to fear. In a meeting last week with the head of the investigations division, Muller noted the official was "visibly trembling," which is probably a byproduct of the warnings and preparation such officials in sensitive positions receive from the security services before sitting down with international organizations.

License and Registration, Please

16. (SBU) Poloff has recently been commuting via a local driver and his personal car, which inevitably provides a first-hand look at traffic stops. On February 27 the driver was pulled over and ultimately ticketed for a seatbelt violation. The officer accepted a spot fine of about USD 2 worth of local currency and dutifully wrote out a shabby-looking receipt; however, Uzbeks laugh this off as just a flimsy way to make it look official and doubt that the proceeds from fines emerges from the officers' pockets. Poloff doubts that the officer could have determined the driver was not wearing a seatbelt from his curbside position well in front of the car but, to be fair, the driver was guilty - and stubborn - about wearing his seatbelt. The law entered into force last year and, perhaps much like the U.S. when the concept was new in the '80s, there are many defiant skeptics. In a place where car safety standards are low, drivers are reckless, and trauma care nonexistent, compulsory use of seat belts is a good idea. With enforcement in the hands of a vast, eager, and omnipresent traffic police force, Tashkenters will be buckling up in no time.

TASHKENT 00000231 003.2 OF 003

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To view the entire SMART message, go to URL http://repository.state.sgov.gov/_layouts/OSSSearchResults.aspx?k=messageid:5cf173e3-fa31-4f91-ade3-327d9574d598